

Testimony before the Energy & Technology Committee

In support of
**RAISED BILL 5385, AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY RETROFITS
FOR CERTAIN BUILDINGS AND THE DISCLOSURE OF THE
ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF CERTAIN BUILDINGS**

Submitted by
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Dear Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on RB 5385, AAC Energy Retrofits for Certain Buildings and the Disclosure of the Energy Efficiency of Certain Buildings. **I urge you support this bill**, which would direct DEEP to establish a program to provide information about a home or apartment's energy use to prospective buyers or tenants, and would create a program for large commercial buildings to track their energy use so they can more effectively plan for conservation.

While I am an employee of one environmental organization supporting this bill and a member of another, I am before you today primarily in another capacity: as the resident of a very drafty apartment.

I live in the East Rock section of New Haven, and I love it. It's safe, the neighbors are friendly, and I can walk to the park or to my job downtown. When I decided to look for an apartment on my own, I knew exactly what I wanted: a spot in one of the big, beautiful Victorian multi-families that characterize the neighborhood. I found one, a great place that was just barely within the budget for me and my roommate, a fellow nonprofit employee.

What I didn't count on was the heating bill. When winter came that big, beautiful apartment turned out to be an energy hog. The quaint old windows with their antique rope-and-weight sashes have drafts you can feel from a foot away. Plastic over them helps, but it doesn't solve the lack of insulation in the walls, which are cold to the touch all winter. Icicles hanging from the roof show where escaping heat has melted snow. Last winter was a cold one, and despite keeping the thermostat at a modest 60 degrees and compensating with several pairs of socks and a hot water bottle, we gave the gas company nearly \$1,000 to heat our two-bedroom apartment from December to March. Even with this unusually mild winter, I'm facing a bill for over \$200 to cover last month.

I'm still there, because three seasons out of the year, there's no place I'd rather be. But that gas bill makes a difference. **That \$1,000 is \$1,000 that went to a gas company, not into a savings account for my future, not to the charities I wish I could support, and not to merchants in downtown New Haven.**

And here's the kicker: I should have known better. I've been helping advocate for energy efficiency legislation for three years, and telling every homeowner I meet about the wonder of Home Energy Solutions. I'm probably a lot more aware of the topic than your average Connecticut resident. But in the excitement of looking for an apartment, that key question—how much does it cost to heat this place?—fell between the cracks.

That's why I think it's so important that a residential energy disclosure policy be mandatory. A voluntary policy would protect only those homebuyers who know to ask for it. **A mandatory disclosure policy ensures that energy information reaches the people who need it most**—those who are on tight budgets and don't have a lot of background knowledge about building efficiency. A mandatory policy is also the only way that **efficiency can become a true market force**, by ensuring that everyone has access to full information to make the decisions that are best for them.

In addition to saving money for individuals, I think the programs proposed by this bill are in the interest of the state as a whole.

I'm concerned by the slow progress Connecticut is making towards meeting its greenhouse gas reduction targets under the Global Warming Solutions Act. Because the vast majority of Connecticut's housing stock was built before any real energy code was in place, **most of our homes are wildly inefficient to heat and cool. Emissions from these homes are responsible for over 20 percent of our state's greenhouse gas emissions.** Disclosure will help us reach our GHG goals by motivating more building owners to invest in energy efficient upgrades. The benchmarking program for commercial buildings will go a step farther—not only providing an incentive, but actually **making it simpler for commercial building managers to work with energy service companies to reduce their buildings' energy consumption.**

Lastly, energy efficiency investments have tremendous potential to stimulate our state economy and create jobs. Studies have shown that **a dollar invested in efficiency returns to the economy fourfold.** For the past several years I've talked with owners and employees of small businesses that install insulation, design efficient lighting systems, replace outdated boilers and HVAC systems, and conduct energy audits. **The people who do this work live in Connecticut, and they spend their paychecks in Connecticut.** Employers are ready and eager to expand, but can't hire new staff unless they know the demand for their services will be there. **This bill, along with another proposal to extend access to the state's energy programs to heating oil customers, have the potential to dramatically increase both demand for efficiency services and customers' ability to access those services.**

Please support RB 5385 in this committee and to encourage your fellow legislators to do so as well. The residential and commercial disclosure programs it creates **will generate job growth among our state's efficiency retrofit businesses and energy performance service companies, will aid in reaching our greenhouse gas obligations, and will provide Connecticut residents with the information they need to make housing choices that fit their budgets.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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